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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002930

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PBTS](#) [SENV](#) [TNGD](#) [TPHY](#) [EAGR](#)
SUBJECT: WATER RESOURCES MINISTER DISCUSSES MAJOR WATER
ISSUES IN IRAQ

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2800
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2899

Classified By: Classified by EMIN John Desrocher for reasons 1.4 b and
d

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Transboundary water negotiations, repair of
the Mosul Dam, salinity issues in Basra province, and
improvement of irrigation drainage are the major water issues
facing Iraq, Minister of Water Resources Dr. Latif Rashid
told USG personnel in late October. END SUMMARY

Three Primary Water Issues Identified by Minister Rashid

[1](#)2. (C) ESTH Officer and ITAO senior consultant for water met
first with Deputy Minister Salar Bakr Sami and then with
Minister of Water Resources Dr. Latif Rashid in late October.
Minister Rashid identified three major water issues in Iraq,
including repair of the Mosul Dam and construction of a
cut-off wall to mitigate structural dam weakness; Basra
province salinity issues and construction of new water source
pipelines and a dam structure to prevent Arabian Gulf
backflow into the Shatt Al Arab; and improvement of
irrigation drainage. Rashid said GOI infrastructure funds to
address these three water issues were included in the
government's 2010 budget request, but other infrastructure
projects would need strong technical justifications to obtain
additional funding.

Minister Ready to Tackle Transboundary Water Issues with
Turkey and Iran

[1](#)3. (C) Minister Rashid said he was ready to come to an
agreement with Turkey on water issues, but added that a final
resolution of any water negotiations would be many years down
the road. DM Salar provided emboffs with a copy of the
Iraq-Turkey Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Water
that was signed October 15 (ref A). The MOU calls for
designating National Coordinators on water in each country,
as well as joint efforts in assessing water resources and
data sharing. (The MOU stipulates that all data will be
shared with Syria.) The MOU does not mandate a minimum water
release rate by Turkey.

[1](#)4. (C) According to Minister Rashid, he and DM Salar were
headed to Iran to discuss two issues: the formation of a
bilateral committee to discuss technical water issues; and a
request that Iran release a minimum of 200 cm/s from the
Karun River, which flows into the Tigris River in Iraq. USG
personnel showed the Minister several unclassified
photographs taken near the Iranian border that appear to show
that Iran had constructed a sand berm that blocked another
river (the Karkh) from flowing into Iraq and caused pooling
of water on the Iranian side of the border. (See ref B for
background of water flows from Iran.) Minister Rashid
expressed appreciation for the information, saying it was

timely given his planned meeting in Iran. (According to published reports, the GOI appears to have been successful in one objective during their meeting with Iran: formation of the bilateral committee.)

Iraq May Award 30-yr Strategic Water Plan Contract to Russian Firm

15. (C) Minister Rashid said the GOI invited 24 companies to provide a proposal for preparing a 30-yr Strategic Water Plan for Iraq that would, inter alia, identify potential ground water resources, assess surface water issues, and make recommendations for improvements. DM Salar said the plan would include two types of Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, one depicting current irrigable land (estimated at one million acres), and another depicting potential irrigable land areas (estimated at seven million acres). Minister Rashid said only three companies - from the United Kingdom, Italy, and Russia - had responded to the government tender, and that the Russians had the best proposal. He added that Russia had provided good support to the Iraqi agricultural sector in the past, pointing to the 1980's construction of the Main Outfall Drain. (The Main Outfall Drain collects water drainage from irrigation canals scattered throughout the central Iraq and transfers the waters to the Shatt Al Arab downstream of Basra.) DM Salar stated that once awarded, the project would be completed within 45 months.

Mosul Dam Cut Off Wall and North, South, and East Jazeera Projects Close to Award

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16. (C) DM Salar said a German company and an Italian company are being considered for the Mosul Dam project, which has a first-year (2010) budget allocation of some \$900 million. Salar stated that the Ministry would welcome Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) assistance in reviewing these proposals. (Note: ACE is sending three experts to Iraq in early December to assist with the technical review. End note) According to Salar, the project will cost \$3 billion and take six years to construct.

17. (C) Salar also discussed the North, South, and East Jazeera irrigation projects near the Mosul Dam in northern Iraq. According to Salar, the MoWR has signed a contract for 200 new lineal pivot irrigation systems for the North Jazeera project, and funding to buy 200 more systems was included in the 2010 GOI budget. Salar said the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) would update the 1982 plan for the South Jazeera irrigation project, looking at whether to reduce the project's size and whether there is enough water in the area to continue the project. According to Salar, the MoWR also signed a contract in October with an Iraqi-Turkish joint venture to implement the East Jazeera project and change it from a rain-fed project to an irrigation project.

Rashid and Salar May Move On After Elections

18. (C) Minister Rashid stated that he would not seek to continue as the MoWR minister after January's election, but would pursue new challenges after heading the Ministry of Water Resources for the last six years. DM Salar said he planned to retire after the elections, and talked about returning to Kurdistan and helping his people. (Salar is from Erbil.) He added that he does not leave his ministry's building often due to security concerns and actually lived on the premises.

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